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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
U.S. SENATE

BY THE

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 102 OF THE
INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ACT OF 1998

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FOREWORD

The report on international religious freedom contained herein was prepared by the Department of State in accordance with Section 102 of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998.

The report is printed to assist Members of Congress in the consideration of legislation, particularly foreign assistance legislation.

HENRY J. HYDE,

Chairman, Committee on International Relations.

JOSEPH R. BIDEN, JR.,

Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC, October 26, 2001.

Hon. HENRY J. HYDE, *Chairman,*
Committee on International Relations,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: On behalf of Secretary of State Colin Powell, I am very pleased to transmit to Congress the *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom 2001*. This report is prepared in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998, and covers events from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001.

We sincerely hope that this report is helpful. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

PAUL V. KELLY, *Assistant Secretary.*

PREFACE

2001 REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Why The Reports Are Prepared

This report is submitted to the Congress by the Department of State in compliance with Section 102(b) of the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. The law provides that the Secretary of State shall transmit to Congress by September 1 of each year, or the first day thereafter on which the appropriate House of Congress is in session, "an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom supplementing the most recent Human Rights Reports by providing additional detailed information with respect to matters involving international religious freedom." This Annual Report includes 195 reports on countries worldwide.

How The Reports Are Prepared

In August 1993, the Secretary of State moved to further strengthen the human rights efforts of our embassies. All sections in each embassy were asked to contribute information and to corroborate reports of human rights violations, and new efforts were made to link mission programming to the advancement of human rights and democracy. In 1994 the Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs was reorganized and renamed as the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, reflecting both a broader sweep and a more focused approach to the interlocking issues of human rights, worker rights, and democracy. In 1998 the Secretary of State established the Office of International Religious Freedom; in May 1999, Robert A. Seiple was sworn in as the first Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. The position has been vacant since Ambassador Seiple left in September 2000.

The 2001 Report covers the period from July 1, 2000 to June 30, 2001, and reflects a year of dedicated effort by hundreds of State Department, Foreign Service, and other U.S. Government employees. Our embassies, which prepared the initial drafts of the reports, gathered information throughout this period from a variety of sources, including government and religious officials, nongovernmental organizations, journalists, human rights monitors, religious groups, and academics. This information-gathering can be hazardous, and U.S. Foreign Service Officers regularly go to great lengths, under trying and sometimes dangerous conditions, to investigate reports of human rights abuse, monitor elections, and come to the aid of individuals at risk because of their religious beliefs.

After the embassies completed their drafts, the texts were sent to Washington for careful review by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and its Offices of International Religious Freedom, Country Reports and Asylum Affairs, and Bilateral Affairs, in cooperation with other State Department offices. As they worked to corroborate, analyze, and edit the reports, the Department officers drew on their own sources of information. These included reports provided by U.S. and other human rights groups, foreign government officials, representatives from the United Nations and other international and regional organizations and institutions, and experts from academia and the media. Officers also consulted with experts on issues of religious discrimination and persecution, religious leaders from all faiths, and experts on legal matters. The guiding principle was to ensure that all relevant information was assessed as objectively, thoroughly, and fairly as possible.

The Report will be used as a resource for shaping policy, conducting diplomacy, and making assistance, training, and other resource allocations. As mandated by IRFA, it also will be used as a basis for decisions on determining countries that have engaged in or tolerated "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom. Countries involved in these and other violations according to IRFA are not identified as such in this report, but have been and will be engaged independently by the U.S. Government. The Report also will serve as a basis for the U.S. Government's co-

operation with private groups to promote the observance of the internationally recognized right to religious freedom.

INTRODUCTION

It is not an accident that freedom of religion is one of the central freedoms in our Bill of Rights. It is the first freedom of the human soul—the right to speak the words that God places in our mouths. We must stand for that freedom in our country. We must speak for that freedom in the world.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
*May 3, 2001, speech to the
American Jewish Committee*

The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act requires that the Secretary of State, assisted by the Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, publish an Annual Report on International Religious Freedom each September. The Annual Reports must include a description of the status of religious freedom in each foreign country, including any violations of religious freedom and any trends toward improvement, as well as an Executive Summary.

The purpose of these reports is to advance the U.S. policy of promoting religious freedom internationally—to speak for that freedom in the world. U.S. policy draws deeply on two traditions: the history and commitment of the American people, and the standards established by the international community. These two traditions not only are consistent but are mutually supportive.

THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The United States has a longstanding commitment to religious liberty. America's founders made religious freedom the first freedom of the Constitution—giving it pride of place among those liberties enumerated in the Bill of Rights—because they believed that guaranteeing the right to search for transcendent truths and ultimate human purpose was a critical component of a durable democracy.

The Founders believed in the universality of human dignity—that all human beings are endowed by the Creator with certain rights that are theirs by virtue of their existence. These rights were inalienable because they were understood to exist prior to societies and governments, and were granted by neither.

A commitment to the inviolable and universal dignity of the human person is at the core of U.S. human rights policy abroad, including the policy of advocating religious freedom. Governments that protect religious freedom for all their citizens are more likely to protect the other fundamental human rights. Encouraging stable, healthy democracies is a vital national interest of the United States. The spread of democracy makes for good neighbors, economic prosperity, increased trade, and a decrease in conflict.

THE INTERNATIONAL NORM OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Freedom of religion and conscience is one of the foundational rights in the post-War system of international human rights instruments. Beginning with Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, religious freedom also is provided for in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Helsinki Accords, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the U.N. Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

The belief that fundamental human rights are not created by, but exist prior to, governments is reflected in international instruments as well. According to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights—the foundational text for international human rights advocacy,—“all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,” and are “endowed with reason and conscience.”

In recent years, the international commitment to religious freedom has increased. For example, in 1986 the U.N. Commission on Human Rights established the office of the Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance, now the Special Rapporteur on

Freedom of Religion or Belief. Since his appointment in 1993, Special Rapporteur Abdelfattah Amor has issued reports on a variety of countries, including Sudan, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Pakistan, Iran, Vietnam, India, Australia, Greece, Germany, and the United States. His work provides substantial and continuing evidence of the commitment of the international community to promoting religious freedom.

The Department of State presents this third *Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (2001) both because it is a vital part of U.S. human rights policy and furthers the interests of the United States, and because of our abiding commitment to the international standard of religious freedom.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vast majority of the world's governments have committed themselves to respect religious freedom. In 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, recognizing that freedom of belief had been proclaimed the highest aspiration of the common people. In Article 18, member states affirmed the right of everyone to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including the freedom to change one's religion and manifest one's religion alone or with others, in public or private. Article 29 stated that the only limitations on religious freedom permissible were those that would secure recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and would meet the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

In addition to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, most countries have accepted one or more of the other international instruments that explicitly protect freedom of religion and belief. For example, 144 countries are parties to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which acknowledges the right of every human being to have or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice and either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. All signatories have pledged "not to discriminate on the basis of religion."

Notwithstanding the existence of these broadly accepted international instruments protecting religious freedom, there exists in some countries a substantial difference between promise and practice. Much of the world's population lives in countries where the right to religious freedom is restricted or prohibited. This gap between word and deed has several causes and can be analyzed in various ways. We believe the following system of categorization is useful for understanding religious persecution and discrimination.

The first category identifies countries as totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, characterized primarily by their attempts to control thought and expression, including religion. A second category consists of those governments hostile toward certain minority or unapproved religions. Third are countries whose governments neglect the problem of discrimination against minority or nonapproved religions. Fourth, some countries have adopted discriminatory legislation or policies that give preferences to favored religions while disadvantaging others. A final category used in this report identifies some democratic states that have instituted laws or policies resulting in the stigmatization of certain religions—the consequence of identifying them indiscriminately and inaccurately with dangerous "sects" or "cults."

In addition to identifying countries where violations of religious freedom have occurred, this Executive Summary contains a section that gives examples of nations whose governments have taken positive steps to promote or protect religious freedom, although in some cases serious problems may remain. The final section of the summary gives illustrations of actions the U.S. government has taken to encourage other nations to promote and protect the right to affirm one's faith openly and freely and practice that faith without fear of intimidation or reprisals.

This report does not neglect the effect of history, culture, and tradition on religious freedom policies. A particular religion may have dominated the life of a nation for centuries, making more difficult the acceptance of new faiths that offer challenges in both cultural and theological terms. However, tradition and culture should not be used as a pretext for laws or policies that restrict genuine religious belief or its legitimate manifestation. International covenants allow legal restrictions on religious practice, but they must be applied scrupulously and fairly, in as limited a way as possible, without discriminating among religions.

In the end, every nation should meet the standards on religious freedom established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments and covenants that they have accepted. Each nation is accountable to the international community for its failure to meet these standards. The United States

acknowledges and accepts its responsibility to meet these standards in the safeguarding and protection of religious liberty.

The summary is divided into three sections:

- I. Barriers to International Religious Freedom
- II. Positive Developments in International Religious Freedom
- III. U.S. Action to Promote International Religious Freedom

Readers should note that many countries are mentioned in more than one section of the Executive Summary, according to the specific situation being reported.

Part I: Barriers to International Religious Freedom

TOTALITARIAN OR AUTHORITARIAN ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL RELIGIOUS BELIEF OR PRACTICE

Totalitarian and authoritarian regimes are defined by the high degree to which they seek to control thought and expression, especially dissent. It is not uncommon for such regimes to regard religious groups as enemies of the state because of the content of the religion, the fact that the very practice of religion threatens the dominant ideology (often by diverting the loyalties of adherents toward an authority beyond the state), the ethnic character of the religious group, or a mixture of all three. When one or more of these elements is present, the result often is the suppression of religion by the regime.

Afghanistan. Through rigid enforcement of its strict interpretation of Islamic law, Shari'a, the Taliban has caused a marked deterioration of religious freedom in the territory under its control. The Afghan Shi'a minority has been the victim of abuse in significant part because of their religious beliefs. In January 2001, Taliban fighters killed a large number of Hazaras, a Shi'a ethnic group. A month later, despite pleas from many parts of the world, the Taliban destroyed two historic giant Buddhist statues of immense cultural value. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize, and apostasy is a capital offense. The Taliban maintained decrees issued in 1999 that forbade the small non-Muslim minority population from building places of worship, ordered them to identify their houses, precluded them from living in the same residence as Muslims, and required non-Muslim women to wear special identifying clothing. In August 2001, after the reporting period, the Taliban arrested members of an international relief agency for proselytizing and was threatening to execute the agency's Afghan employees for allegedly converting to Christianity from Islam.

Burma. The Government continued to impose restrictions on certain religious activities. Through its pervasive internal security apparatus, the Government generally infiltrated or monitored the meetings and activities of virtually all organizations, including religious organizations. It systematically restricted efforts by Buddhist clergy to promote human rights and political freedom, discouraged or prohibited minority religions from constructing new places of worship and, in some ethnic minority areas, coercively promoted Buddhism over other religions, particularly among members of the minority ethnic groups. The Government prohibited Christian clergy from proselytizing in some areas, and in at least one instance, soldiers beat clergy to discourage them from proselytizing. It also maintained restrictions on the local publication of the Bible and on Christian and Muslim material in general. Christian groups have experienced difficulties in obtaining permission to build new churches, while Muslims allege that they essentially are banned from constructing any new mosques anywhere in the country. There also was a significant increase in the level of anti-Muslim violence, in some of which the Government may have acquiesced.

China. The situation for religious freedom and spiritual movements worsened in the past year. The Government continued its policy of restricting religious practice to government-sanctioned organizations in order to prevent the rise of sources of authority outside the control of the Government and the Chinese Communist Party. Many religious adherents reported they were able to practice their faith in officially registered places of worship without interference from the authorities. According to some reports, the Government intensified its harsh and comprehensive campaign against the Falun Gong spiritual movement during the early spring of 2001 and some practitioners reportedly died in prison due to torture and other kinds of mistreatment. Tibetan Buddhist monks suffered abuse and torture after being imprisoned on charges of political activity. The Government continued to prohibit Tibetan Buddhists from recognizing the authority of the Dalai Lama. In some areas, large underground Vatican-affiliated Catholic Church and Protestant "house churches" were subject to more frequent raids and persecution, although persecution of such groups eased somewhat in southeastern China during the year. Security authorities

cracked down on unregistered churches and their members using threats, demolition of property, extortion, and detention. The intensity of the crackdown varied from region to region.

Cuba. The Government continued, in law and in practice, to impose restrictions on freedom of religion. The Ministry of Interior engaged in efforts to control and monitor religious institutions, using infiltration, surveillance and harassment of religious groups. New evangelical groups complained that authorities ignored their attempts to obtain registration, leaving these groups open to potential charges of illegal association. The Government rarely authorizes permits for the construction of new churches, forcing many churches to seek permits to meet in private homes. The process for obtaining a permit and purchasing materials to repair existing churches continued to be a lengthy and expensive process. Religious educational institutions are not allowed. Prisoners, both common and political, at times were arbitrarily denied access to clergy and religious material.

Laos. The Government's poor record of respect for religious freedom deteriorated in some aspects during the period covered by this report. The Government sought greater regulation of the activities of religious organizations. The Lao Peoples Revolutionary Party and the Government emphasized the potential of religion to divide, distract, or destabilize the country and inhibited religious practice by all persons, including the Buddhist majority and a large population of animists. Antireligious activities by local officials continued despite occasional attempts by the central Government to restrain them. In some provinces, the authorities continued to force hundreds of Christians to sign renunciations of their faith and threatened some civil servants with loss of their positions if they did not sign the renunciations. In certain areas, local authorities arrested and detained religious believers and their spiritual leaders, at times meting out harsh sentences on the charge of gathering to create social turmoil. Some minority religious groups reported that they were unable to register new congregations or receive permission to establish new places of worship. While the number of detentions for religious activities went down nationwide, renunciation campaigns and harassment increased in a few provinces. During the period covered by this report, government authorities closed more than 65 churches.

North Korea. Although the Constitution provides for freedom of religious belief, the Government continued to suppress organized religious activity except that of officially recognized groups. Religious and human rights groups outside the country provided numerous reports that members of underground churches have been beaten, arrested, or killed because of their religious beliefs. While difficult to confirm, the collective weight of anecdotal evidence of harsh treatment of unauthorized religious activity lends credence to such reports. In particular religious persons who proselytize or who have ties to overseas evangelical groups operating across the border with China appear to have been arrested and subjected to harsh penalties, including death, according to several unconfirmed reports.

Vietnam. The Government continued to repress religious groups that lacked official recognition. Some of these groups were refused recognition by the Government; others declined to request recognition for various reasons, including not wanting to give the Government a list of members, or from the assumption that the request would be refused. Repressive measures included the destruction of unregistered churches, the arrest and detention of religious leaders, and incidents of forced renunciations of faith. With some prominent exceptions involving groups that do not enjoy official recognition, individual believers in Vietnam generally are free to worship. Religious groups that enjoy official sanction do not face harassment or active repression, but the Government kept in place restrictions on the hierarchies and clergy of these groups. For example, it continued to limit the numbers of ordinations to the clergy, the publication of religious materials, and educational and humanitarian activities. In some cases, the Government appointed the leadership of official religious organizations, while in others it exercised veto power over leadership appointment. By requiring religious groups to register with the authorities, the Government controlled and monitored church organizations. Control measures included the political vetting of the leadership of religious organizations and of candidates to become priests or monks. Police routinely questioned persons advocating dissident religious views and arbitrarily detained persons based on their religious beliefs and practices. Officials in some provinces harassed, and at times detained or arrested ethnic minority Protestant Christians who worshipped in unregistered house churches. Authorities imprisoned persons for peacefully practicing religion by using provisions of the Penal Code that allow for jail terms of up to 3 years for "abusing freedom of speech, press, or religion."

STATE HOSTILITY TOWARD MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

Some governments, while not necessarily determined to implement a program of control over minority religions, nevertheless are hostile to certain minority religions or to elements of religious groups identified as “security threats.” These governments implement policies designed to intimidate certain religious groups, cause their adherents to convert to another faith, or cause their members to flee.

Iran. Government actions continued to create a threatening atmosphere for some religious minorities. All religious minorities suffered varying degrees of officially sanctioned discrimination, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and housing. University applicants are required to pass an examination in Islamic theology, which limited the access of most religious minorities to higher education. The Government fueled anti-Baha’i and anti-Jewish sentiment for political purposes. Baha’is, Jews, Christians, Mandaean, and Sufi Muslims reported imprisonment, harassment, or intimidation based on their religious beliefs. At least 10 Baha’is were among those still imprisoned for reasons related to their faith, while 9 Jews remained in prison after being convicted for cooperating with a hostile government, belonging to an illegal organization, and recruiting members in an illegal organization. The Revolutionary Court’s conduct in the trial of 13 Jews contributed to worsening societal attitudes toward the Jewish community. The property rights of Baha’is generally were disregarded.

Iraq. Although Shi’a Arabs are the largest religious group in Iraq, Sunni Arabs dominate economic and political life. The Government systematically discriminates against the Shi’as, severely restricting or banning many Shi’a religious practices. It has for decades conducted a brutal campaign of murder, summary execution, arbitrary arrest, and protracted detention against the Shi’a religious leaders and adherents. The regime has desecrated Shi’a mosques and holy sites, disrupted Shi’a religious ceremonies, and interfered with Shi’a religious education. It has banned the broadcast of Shi’a programs on government-controlled radio or television and the publication of Shi’a books. In addition the Government has sought to undermine the identity of minority Christian (Assyrian and Chaldean) and Yazidi groups. The Government consistently politicizes and interferes with religious pilgrimages, both of Iraqi Muslims who wish to travel to Mecca and Medina, and of Iraqi and non-Iraqi Muslim pilgrims who travel to holy sites in the country.

Pakistan. The Government failed in many respects to protect the rights of minorities, due both to public policy and unwillingness to alienate certain societal forces hostile to those that practice a different faith. President Musharraf advocated greater tolerance between branches of Islam in society in his June 5 2001 speech to a group of Muslim clergy and announced a ban on two violent sectarian groups. However, discriminatory policies and legislation continue to cause problems for religious minorities. In the case of the Ahmadiya community, the Government discriminates by means of Constitutional and other legal provisions that prohibit members from practicing their religion. Members of religious minorities are relegated to a separate electorate system that, while originally intended to ensure minority representation, means that most members of Parliament have no accountability to minorities. The country’s blasphemy laws frequently are misused to target religious minorities. The “Hudood ordinances” dictate that the legal testimony of religious minorities in certain cases such as rape does not carry the same weight as that of Muslims; this provision leaves minorities particularly vulnerable to acts of societal violence. Discriminatory religious legislation adds to an atmosphere of religious intolerance, which at times has contributed to acts of violence directed against Muslim groups, as well as against Christians, Hindus, and members of Muslim offshoot groups, such as Ahmadis and Zikris. Many people unjustly accused of blasphemy continue to remain in jail. Relations between different religious groups frequently were tense, and the number of deaths attributed to sectarian violence increased—an issue the government has begun to address by banning certain sectarian groups and initiating a deweaponization campaign.

Saudi Arabia. Freedom of religion does not exist in Saudi Arabia. The Government requires all citizens to be Muslim and continues to prohibit all public manifestations of non-Muslim religions. The Government has stated publicly that it recognizes the right of non-Muslims to worship in private; however, the distinction between public and private worship is not defined clearly, and at times the Government detained or interfered with non-Muslims engaged in private worship services, in effect forcing most non-Muslims to worship in a manner such as to avoid discovery. The Government does not permit clergy members to travel into the country to conduct non-Muslim religious services. This places groups such as Catholics and Orthodox Christians who must have a priest on a regular basis to practice their faith at a particular disadvantage. Customs officials confiscated or censored mate-

rials considered offensive, including Bibles and religious videotapes. In certain areas, both the Mutawwa'in (religious police) and religious vigilantes acting on their own harassed, assaulted, and detained citizens and foreigners. Some members of the Shi'a minority continued to face institutionalized political and economic discrimination, including restrictions on the practice of their faith. According to reports, a number of Shi'a sheikhs were arrested and detained for violating restrictions on Shi'a religious practices.

Sudan. The Government continued to restrict the activities of Christians, followers of traditional indigenous religions, as well as some Islamic groups. Non-Muslims are forbidden to proselytize, and apostasy is a capital offense. The Government restricted large religious assemblies, and visas for foreign Catholic priests were not renewed expeditiously. The Government's treatment of Islam as the state religion contributed to an atmosphere in which non-Muslims are treated as second class citizens. There continued to be reports that security forces harassed and arrested persons for religious beliefs and activities. Exacerbated by the civil war, the Government and government-supported forces were responsible for intentional bombings of civilian targets, the burning and looting of villages, and the killings, rapes, and arbitrary arrests and detentions of civilians, most of whom were practitioners of traditional indigenous religions or Christians. The forced abduction of women and children and the taking of slaves by slave raiders supported by the Government in war zones, and their transport to parts of central and northern Sudan and sometimes beyond, continued and was due in part to the victim's religious beliefs.

Turkmenistan. The Government's respect for freedom of religion deteriorated during the period covered by the report. Registration requirements are restrictive, preventing all religions except Sunni Islam and Russian Orthodoxy from registering. Harassment of unregistered religious groups, particularly evangelical Protestants, intensified to include several instances of torture, arrest, and seizure or destruction of property. Two Protestant congregations were evicted by the Ashgabat municipal government from the houses in which they held services. Four Baptists were tortured after religious literature was found in their car. Other religious groups also were targeted. The Government continued to control, and limit access to, Islamic education. Beginning in 1997, the Government began prohibiting mosque-based imams from teaching about Islam, and all Islamic education is now conducted in only one institution. The Government also continued to limit participation in the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, allowing travel for a number far fewer than the country's quota.

Uzbekistan. The Government continued its harsh campaign against unauthorized Islamic groups that it suspected of anti-State sentiments or activities, and arrested hundreds of alleged members of these groups and sentenced them to lengthy jail terms. The Government also imprisoned dozens of Muslims suspected of being "Wahabbist," a term used loosely to encompass both suspected terrorists and any former students of certain independent imams or foreign madrassas (Islamic schools). The number of Muslim prisoners remained high and court sentences often were severe, although the President recently criticized the courts for this practice and thousands of prisoners were released. There were credible reports that police mistreatment resulted in the deaths of persons in custody. Law enforcement officials regularly beat and tortured suspects held in pretrial detention including those accused of religious extremism to extract confessions. Severe mistreatment of convicted prisoners also is common. As religiously observant Muslim women—wives, mothers, daughters, sisters of husbands, sons, and brothers imprisoned—became more active during the year, authorities took steps to detain them as well, although most were released without charge. Many minority religions were able to worship without impediment; nevertheless, a number of minority religious groups, including a variety of Christian confessions, Baha'i, and Hare Krishna, had difficulty satisfying the strict registration requirements set out by the law.

STATE NEGLECT OF THE PROBLEM OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST, OR PERSECUTION OF, MINORITY OR NONAPPROVED RELIGIONS

In some countries, governments have laws or policies to discourage religious discrimination and persecution but fail to act with sufficient consistency and vigor against violations of religious freedom by nongovernmental entities or local law enforcement officials.

Egypt. Members of the non-Muslim minority generally were able to worship without interference, but there continued to be some governmental and societal discrimination. In January 2001, security authorities arrested 18 Egyptians, most of them Baha'is, on suspicion of "insulting religion;" 10 remained in detention without charge at the end of the period covered by this report. In addition several intellec-

tuals faced trial or charges related to writings or statements on the subject of religion. Government discrimination against some non-Muslims persisted. For example, despite some improvement, the approval process for church construction continued to be time-consuming and insufficiently responsive to the wishes of the Christian community. In February 2001, a criminal court acquitted 92 of 96 defendants suspected of crimes committed while participating in violence in the village of Al-Kush in January 2000 that resulted in the deaths of 20 Christians and 1 Muslim. Coptic authorities and civic society organizations believed the verdicts were inappropriately lenient; in response, the Egyptian government appealed the criminal court's ruling. On July 30, after the end of the period covered by this report, the Court of Cassation ordered a retrial of the 92 suspects who had been acquitted of participation in the violence in Al-Kush.

Anti-Semitism is found in the government press and increased in late 2000 and 2001 following the outbreak of violence in Israel and the occupied territories. The Government has advised journalists and cartoonists to avoid anti-Semitism.

India. Although senior members of the central Government reaffirmed India's constitutional commitment to secularism, the central Government was not always effective in countering attacks against religious minorities or attempts by state and local authorities to limit religious freedom. Tensions between Muslims and Hindus, and increasingly between Hindus and Christians, continued in several states, where personal and property disputes occasionally took on a religious coloration. Human rights groups and others suggested that the authorities in these states did not respond adequately to acts of violence against religious minorities by Hindu extremist groups, due at least in part to the perceived links such groups had with the leading party in the governing coalition. In November 2000 the Orissa state government began enforcing a provision of state law whereby religious conversions could not occur without the local police and district magistrate being notified. The need for a police officer's recommendation in effect placed the police as the sole arbitrator on an individual's right to freedom of religion in that state. There were numerous reports of human rights abuses carried out by security forces and local officials in Jammu and Kashmir against the Muslim population. With an apparent view toward driving non-Muslims from Kashmir, militants continued a campaign of violent, often brutal attacks. The Hindu group Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh incensed minority communities by publicly challenging the "Indian-ness" of religious minorities and advocating the "Indianization" of Islam and Christianity.

Indonesia. The Government continued to be incapable of controlling religious extremism or preventing the violence perpetrated and encouraged by radical groups claiming to represent certain religious views. This led to allegations that officials either were complicit in some of the incidents or, at a minimum, allowed them to occur with impunity. For example, religious intolerance manifested itself in killings and forced conversions in the Moluccas, in numerous attacks on churches in various locations throughout the country, and in repeated attacks on entertainment centers in Jakarta. Certain Government policies also contributed to religious discrimination. Minority religious groups complained of difficulties in obtaining permits to repair or construct churches. Adherents of nonrecognized religions told of problems in registering marriages and births. The Government granted Aceh Province the authority to implement certain aspects of Shari'a law and is considering broadening that authority. Other provincial parliaments were deliberating the possibility of imposing Shari'a, causing non-Muslims to fear that these efforts portend growing Islamic fundamentalism and a resulting deterioration in religious tolerance.

Nigeria. While the violence of early 2000 was not repeated during the period covered by this report, relations between Christians and Muslims remained uneasy and even tense in some parts of Nigeria. Although most of the conflict was interethnic rather than religious in origin, the return of criminal Shari'a law exacerbated tensions in some areas. Nine Northern states followed Zamfara State's lead and re-introduced most elements of criminal Shari'a. Shari'a law by definition applies only to Muslims, but some Northern Christians are concerned that their religious freedom may be infringed by this return to Islamic criminal law. In some states Shari'a criminal jurisdiction over Muslims is mandatory, while in others Muslims may elect to have their cases tried in common-law courts. This represents a change from past practice; previously Shari'a courts heard only Muslims' cases involving family and civil law matters. There were episodic minor conflicts between Christians and Muslims in several states considering the reintroduction of criminal Shari'a.

DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION OR POLICIES DISADVANTAGING CERTAIN RELIGIONS

Some governments have implemented laws or regulations that favor certain religions and place others at a disadvantage. Often this circumstance is the result of

the historical predominance of one religion in a country and may reflect broad social skepticism about new or minority religions. At times it stems from the emergence of a country from a long period of Communist rule, in which all religion was prohibited or, at best, out of favor. In such countries, skepticism or even the fear of certain religions or all religions lingers within segments of society. In some cases, this circumstance has led to a curtailment of religious freedom.

Belarus. The status of religious freedom worsened in Belarus. Head of State Alexander Lukashenka continued to pursue a deliberate policy of favoring the Russian Orthodox Church as the country's main religion, and the authorities increased harassment of other denominations and religions. Some of these, including many Protestant denominations, the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church, and some eastern religions, were caught up in the restrictive circularity of repeatedly being denied registration by the regime because they did not have a legal address, while at the same time being refused—on the basis of not being registered—the leasing or return of property that could qualify as such a legal address or could provide a place to worship. Without registration, many of these groups found it difficult, if not impossible, to rent or purchase property to conduct religious services. Regime officials share societal anti-Semitic attitudes and took a number of actions that indicated hostility or insensitivity toward the Jewish community. In December 2000, a Minsk synagogue was fire-bombed and no discernible effort has been made by the authorities to find those responsible for the incident. Officially-sanctioned state newspaper and state television attacks on minority faiths also rose in frequency.

Brunei. Despite constitutional provisions providing for the exercise of religious freedom, the Government continued to restrict the practice of non-Muslim religions by prohibiting proselytizing of Muslims and occasionally denying entry to foreign clergy or particular priests, bishops, or ministers. The Government also has restricted importation of religious teaching materials or scriptures such as the bible and not given permission to expand, repair, or build new churches, temples, or shrines.

Bulgaria. Parliament deliberated extensively during the year on a proposed new law regulating religious organizations. The proposal, containing numerous provisions that would have limited religious freedom, was shelved. However, in response to some parliamentarians' insistence for similar legislation, a new religion law proposal was introduced in the newly elected parliament; however, no action had been taken by the end of the period covered by this report. In a number of Bulgarian cities (including Burgas, Pleven, and Stara Zagora), there was a trend toward the enactment of new ordinances aimed at curtailing religious freedom rights for certain religions. The national Government has on some occasions, but not systematically, stopped local governments from enforcing restrictive municipal government decisions; it also has pledged to promote greater tolerance among ethnic and religious groups. Relations between the major religious communities generally were amiable; however, public opinion and periodic media articles continued to suggest a somewhat hostile and alarmist attitude toward nontraditional religious groups, although there were fewer manifestations of this sentiment than in earlier years. The legal requirement obliging entities whose activities have a religious element to register with the Council of Ministers remained an obstacle to the activity of some religious groups. In contrast to earlier practice, there were no reported instances of any direct government, police, or societal harassment against religious workers or worshippers during the practice or propagation of their faith.

Eritrea. The Government continued to subject members of Jehovah's Witnesses to harsh treatment for their refusal to participate in national service and other civic duties. Most members of the group continued to be denied civil service employment, trading licenses, access to government-owned housing, passport, identity cards, and exit visas.

Georgia. Overall there was a deterioration in the status of religious freedom. Local police and security officials at times harassed "nontraditional" religious minority groups and were complicit in or failed to respond to violent attacks against Jehovah's Witnesses, Assembly of God followers, and other evangelical Christians. These attacks were conducted by followers of the ex-communicated priest Basil Mkalavishvili or by members of Jvari (The Cross), a Rustavi-based Georgian Orthodox group not directly affiliated with the "Basileists." The Interior Ministry (police) and Procuracy generally have failed to pursue criminal cases against Orthodox extremists for their attacks. The few investigations that have been opened are proceeding very slowly and at times have turned on the victims.

Israel and the Occupied Territories. Non-Jewish Israeli citizens, the majority of whom are Muslim, Christian, and Druze, continued to be subject to various forms of discrimination. Government funding to the various religious sectors is disproportional.

tionate, tending to favor Jewish citizens. Some Jewish and Arab groups have objected to the Government's policy of designating nationality on national identity cards. Many Jewish citizens objected to the fact that Orthodox Jewish religious authorities have exclusive control over Jewish marriages, divorces, and burials. The ongoing violence and the Israeli Government's closure policy of the occupied territories prevented a number of Palestinians and Israelis from reaching their places of worship in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Both the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government have prohibited non-Muslims from entering the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount). Since the outbreak of the Intifada, the rhetoric of some Jewish and Muslim religious leaders was harsh and at times constituted an incitement to violence.

Jordan. Some religious denominations, including the Druze, Baha'i, and certain Christian groups, have not been accorded official recognition. Consequently members of these unrecognized religious groups and religious converts faced legal discrimination and bureaucratic difficulties in personal status cases, which are adjudicated in Muslim Shari'a courts.

Malaysia. Islam is the official religion, and the practice of Islamic beliefs other than Sunni Islam is restricted significantly. For Muslims, particularly ethnic Malays, the right to leave the Islamic faith and adhere to another religion is a controversial right, and in practice it is very difficult for Muslims to change religions, as evidenced by a recent court ruling that an ethnic Malay is defined by the federal Constitution as "a person who professes the religion of Islam." Proselytizing of Muslims by members of other religions is prohibited, although proselytizing of non-Muslims faces no obstacles. The Government generally respects non-Muslims' right of worship; however, state governments carefully control the building of non-Muslim places of worship and the allocation of land for non-Muslim cemeteries and were very slow in granting approvals for such permits. The Government continued to monitor the activities of the Shi'a minority and periodically detained members of what it considers Islamic "deviant sects" without trial or charge.

Romania. Government registration and recognition requirements still pose obstacles to minority religions. Following the accession to power of the left-center Party of Social Democracy of Romania (PDSR) in December 2000, reorganization and staffing of the new Government has put on hold many religious initiatives. While the new Government eased distinctions between types of places of worship that could be constructed by recognized and unrecognized religions, new requirements for construction of these churches may make the process more difficult for minority religions. Progress on restitution of properties slowed under the PDSR Government. In February 2001, the PDSR Government sent proposed revisions to the current law on religious denominations to the 15 recognized religions for comment. Though different from the bill the previous Government had withdrawn in February 2000 (after strong objections by non-Orthodox religious groups and human rights groups), most minority religious groups repeated their critical views and the Government did not submit the text to Parliament. Government officials expect the bill to be submitted to Parliament in the fall of 2001 at the earliest.

Russia. Implementation of the more restrictive 1997 Law on Religion, which replaced a more liberal 1990 law, continued to be a source of serious concern. Some local and regional officials used the law to restrict the rights of groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, the Church of Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and the Salvation Army, by refusing to register them even though those groups were registered at the Federal level and in many other localities. There were allegations of politically motivated government interference in the internal affairs of the Jewish, Pentecostal, and Muslim communities. The Government was slow to condemn some anti-Semitic acts and vandalism or to arrest the perpetrators. Muslims, who constitute approximately 10 percent of the population, encountered registration problems along with societal discrimination and antagonism in some areas, apparently as a result of feelings engendered by the continuing conflict in Chechnya.

Turkey. Some Christians and Baha'is faced social and government harassment, including detentions for alleged proselytizing or unauthorized meetings. A Muslim cleric was arrested in June 2001 for insulting the Government, holding an illegal religious meeting, and wearing prohibited religious clothing. An intense debate continues over the government ban on wearing Muslim religious dress in state facilities, including universities. The Government, especially the National Security Council, continued to press for measures to combat "Islamic fundamentalism" or "reactionism" and sought to punish the prominent leader of an Islamic religious community for alleged anti-state behavior. In June 2001, the Constitutional Court banned the Islamist-led Fazilet (Virtue) party, Turkey's largest opposition political group, for anti-secular activities and expelled two members from Parliament.

Yugoslavia. The overall status of respect for religious freedom by both the Federal and Serbian Republic Governments improved somewhat, following the electoral victory of Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition in September 2000. Officials of the new Government expressed a commitment to improving respect for human rights and eliminating discrimination; however, in practice the new Government has provided preferential treatment to the Serbian Orthodox Church. There were some instances of societal discrimination against religious minorities in Serbia. In Kosovo Albanian Muslims attacked Orthodox Serbs in retribution for the massive human rights abuses conducted by Yugoslav and Serbian authorities against Albanians prior to June 1999. In Montenegro tensions between the Montenegrin Orthodox Church and the Serbian Orthodox Church continued and were politicized by opposing political factions, despite the Montenegrin Government's attempts to moderate the situation.

STIGMATIZATION OF CERTAIN RELIGIONS BY WRONGFULLY ASSOCIATING THEM WITH DANGEROUS "CULTS" OR "SECTS"

The governments of a few countries, in an attempt to protect their citizens from dangerous or harmful groups, have adopted discriminating laws and policies. By blurring the distinctions between religions and violent or fraudulent groups, the governments of these countries have disadvantaged groups that may appear to be different or unusual, but are in fact peaceful and straightforward. In all of these countries, existing criminal law is sufficient to address criminal behavior by groups of individuals. New laws or policies that criminalize or stigmatize religious expression can put religious freedom at risk.

Austria. The Government continued its information campaign against religious sects considered potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and society. In 1999 the Ministry for Social Security and Generations issued a new edition of a controversial brochure that described numerous nonrecognized religious groups in negative terms, which many of the groups deemed offensive. This brochure includes information on Jehovah's Witnesses, despite its status as a confessional community. The Federal Office on Sects continues to collect and distribute information on organizations considered sects. Under the law, this office has independent status, but its head is appointed and supervised by the Minister for Social Security and Generations.

In 1998 the Education Ministry granted Jehovah's Witnesses the status of a confessional community and the group immediately requested that it be recognized as a religious group under the 1874 law. The Education Ministry denied the application on the basis that, as a confessional community, Jehovah's Witnesses would need to submit to the required 10-year observation period. In April 2001, the Constitutional Court upheld the Education Ministry's finding. Jehovah's Witnesses filed an appeal with the Administrative Court, arguing that the law is illegal on administrative grounds. The group also has filed an appeal with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Despite initial fears that the inclusion of the Freedom Party (FPO) in government would lead to a decrease in tolerance for nonrecognized religious groups, the situation regarding religious freedom did not change significantly during the period covered by this report. In April 2000, then Minister for Social Security and Generations, Elisabeth Sickl (FPO), announced increased measures to "protect citizens from the damaging influence of sects, cults, and esoteric movements"; however, no new measures were implemented during her tenure. Sickl left office in October 2000 and her successor has announced no new initiatives on this subject.

Belgium. The Parliament established a special commission in 1996 to investigate the dangers posed by cults and sects, especially to children, and to recommend policies to deal with those dangers. The commission released a report in 1997 that described "harmful sectarian organizations." To implement one of the report's recommendations, in May 1998 Parliament passed legislation creating a "Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations." The Center opened its offices in September 2000 and is now fully operational. Parliament passed legislation in October 1998 creating an interagency body that works in conjunction with the Center and includes representatives from law enforcement agencies as well as a number of government ministries. A subgroup of law enforcement officials meets bi-monthly to exchange information on sect activities. The Government has designated one national magistrate in the District Court of First Instance and one local magistrate in each of the 27 judicial districts to monitor cases involving sects.

Some recognized religions complain of incidents of religious discrimination. For example, leaders of the Muslim Executive Council report that women and girls wearing traditional dress or headscarves in some cases face discrimination in em-

ployment and public and private school admissions, even though the law does not prohibit such dress.

The police raided the Church of Scientology's Brussels headquarters for the second time on February 8, 2001, at which time additional documents were seized. Most of the computer equipment seized in a previous raid has been returned to the Church, but the documents still are held by the investigating magistrate. The Government has refused to provide additional information on the case since it is still under investigation. On March 6, 2001, the Church of Scientology filed a formal complaint against the Government with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

France. In 1996 the Gest or Guyard Commission (named for its chairman and rapporteur, respectively) issued a report that identified 173 groups as cults, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Theological Institute of Nimes, and the Church of Scientology. The Government has not outlawed any of the groups on the list; however, members of some of the groups listed have alleged instances of intolerance due to the ensuing publicity and a perception that the groups on the list are potentially harmful.

The Government's Observatory on Sects/Cults was created in 1996 to analyze the phenomenon of cults and to develop proposals for dealing with them. In 1998 the Government issued a decree disbanding the Observatory and creating an Interministerial Mission in the Fight Against Sects/Cults, which is responsible for coordinating periodic interministerial meetings at which government officials can exchange information and coordinate their actions.

The 1905 law on the separation of church and state makes it illegal to discriminate on the basis of faith; however, recent legislation has the potential to place religious freedom at risk. The new "About-Picard" law provides for the dissolution of associations (including religious associations) whose leaders have two or more convictions on any of a variety of offenses, some of which are worded ambiguously, such as "psychological or physical subjection" or "fraudulent abuse of a state of ignorance or weakness." Although the law applies to any legal entity, it may have been inspired by concerns over new and less familiar religions in France. The Senate and the National Assembly voted in favor of the About-Picard legislation in May 2001 and on June 14, 2001, the President signed it into law. To date there have been no cases brought under the About-Picard law.

Germany. The Basic Law (Constitution) provides for religious freedom; however, the Government does not recognize Scientology as a religion and views it as an economic enterprise. Concerns that Scientology's ideology is opposed to a democratic state have led to the screening of firms and individuals in some sectors of business and employment. The federal and state Offices for the Protection of the Constitution, "watchdog" agencies tasked with monitoring groups whose ideologies are deemed to be counter to the democratic order, have been "investigating" the Church of Scientology and Scientologists for approximately 4 years. During that time there have been no prosecutions or convictions of Scientology officials in the country, and the investigation has uncovered no concrete evidence that the Church is a "security" threat.

In 1997 the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin upheld a decision of the 1993 Berlin State government not to grant "public law corporation" status to the Jehovah's Witnesses, on the grounds that they did not offer "indispensable loyalty" to the democratic state. On December 19, 2000, upon appeal, the Constitutional Court found in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses, remanding the case back to the Federal Administrative Court in Berlin. For the first time, the Constitutional Court had examined the conditions for granting the status of a public law corporation and found that for reasons of the separation of church and state, "loyalty to the state" cannot be a condition imposed on religious communities. The Constitutional Court tempered the victory for Jehovah's Witnesses by instructing the Berlin Administrative Court to examine whether Jehovah's Witnesses use coercive methods to prevent their members from leaving the congregation and whether their child-rearing practices conform to German human rights standards. The case had not been resolved by the end of the period covered by this report.

Part II: Positive Developments in the Area of Religious Freedom

The International Religious Freedom Act prescribes a section of the Executive Summary that identifies foreign countries in which there has been a "significant improvement in the protection and promotion" of religious freedom and includes a description of the nature of the improvement as well as an analysis of the factors contributing to it. This report identifies one country in which significant measures have been taken to promote religious freedom. Also mentioned are several other countries

in which positive steps have been taken. As elaborated elsewhere in the Executive Summary and in the country chapters, there remain significant problems of religious discrimination or abuse in some of these countries. It is our hope that these countries will continue to pursue measures that will remove barriers to religious freedom.

Further information on actions by the U.S. Government in these countries also may be found in the respective country chapters.

SIGNIFICANT POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Mexico. In the period covered by this report, the Government held over 80 meetings with representatives from various religions to discuss issues of mutual concern, aimed at fostering a greater understanding at national and local levels of the need to uphold religious freedom and support religious tolerance. In November 2000, the Government signed agreements with six southern states to promote prompt, efficient, and coordinated action in religious affairs, particularly those involving conflicts stemming from religious intolerance. Federal authorities actively collaborated with state officials in the state of Chiapas to reduce tensions caused by religious conflicts. The Government further reduced the difficulties experienced in past years by religious groups to bring in personnel. Syncretist Catholics and Protestant evangelicals in at least 20 parishes are cooperating on development projects that serve their entire communities. Protestant Evangelical and Catholic representatives in Oaxaca ended 47 years of tension between their communities by signing a peace accord in Santiago Jaltepec.

In support of the Government's effort, U.S. Embassy staff met frequently with officials in the Subsecretariat for Religious Affairs within the Secretariat of Government. Embassy representatives met religious leaders throughout the country, including the Cardinal of Guadalajara, the Vicar and the Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, and leaders of the Chiapas-based Buen Samaritano Evangeli Group. The Embassy discussed religious freedom issues with the National Human Rights Commission, the president of the Evangelical Commission in Defense of Human Rights and the Mexican Episcopal Conference (Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference). Embassy staff also visited the Director General of the Seventh Day Adventist Church and representatives of U.S. faith-based organizations in Mexico City to become familiar with their concerns.

POSITIVE STEPS IN RESPECT FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The countries listed below differ in the wide range of problems they face involving religious freedom. Some have significant problems of religious discrimination or abuse. What they have in common is the fact that in one way or another, either through efforts on the part of the Government or of nongovernmental organizations (NGO's), they have taken some positive step or steps in the area of religious freedom.

Argentina. In May 2001, a non-governmental organization, the Interfaith Center for Social Responsibility, officially was launched in a ceremony that took place in the National Congressional Chambers. The board of this entity is made up of religious leaders from Jewish, Catholic, Methodist, and Muslim faith communities. Their goal is to reach, inform and mobilize people to take social action, primarily through their religious organizations.

Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan continues the steady progress toward religious freedom, as some government officials continued to express public support of religious freedom and tolerance, an attitude initiated by President Heyder Aliyev in November 1999 when he announced Azerbaijan's commitment to international standards for religious freedom. In May 2001, Speaker of the Parliament Murtuz Aleskerov encouraged acceptance of citizens who had converted to Christianity. As a result of the Government's positive change in policy, the Jehovah's Witnesses commended the Government of Azerbaijan in an April 2001 letter to the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. Significant progress was made during the period covered by this report in reconstruction of ethnic minority religious sites deliberately destroyed by ethnic cleansing during the war. This included both ground-breaking ceremonies and actual openings of mosques and churches in areas such as Banja Luka, Gradiska, and Prijedor. Leaders of the Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, and Jewish communities have committed themselves publicly to building a durable peace and national reconciliation. The leaders of these four communities are members of the Interreligious Affairs Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which operates with the active involvement of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, a U.S.-based nongovernmental organization. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in

Europe (OSCE) and OHR facilitate interfaith meetings at the local level as well. On June 8, 2001 in Rome, the Catholic conflict resolution group Sant'Egidio hosted a conference on religious reconciliation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish communities sent representatives to the conference, which released a joint statement supporting reconstruction of all religious sites in the country.

Czech Republic. The Government made significant progress in resolving religious-based communal and personal property restitution issues, especially with regard to Jewish property. In July 2000, Parliament passed a law establishing a commission to document the status of former Jewish communal property and, to a limited extent, personal property, and to make recommendations to the Government. The law authorized the return of 200 communal Jewish properties in state hands and also authorized the return of over 2,500 works of art to individual Jewish citizens, their descendants, and the Jewish community. A fourth provision of the law authorized the return of certain agricultural property in the Government's possession to its original owners.

Equatorial Guinea. As of January 2001, the Government no longer requires that Catholic priests obtain government permission before celebrating Mass. This restriction had been put in place in previous years because of the Catholic Church's repeated criticisms of human rights violations, social injustice, and corruption in the country.

Eritrea. Church leaders of most denominations, in particular, leaders of the Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant denominations, meet routinely and engage in ongoing efforts to foster cooperation and understanding between religions, with the major exception of Jehovah's Witnesses. In July 2000, in Oslo, Norway, these leaders met with their Ethiopian counterparts for the fourth time in an ecumenical peace effort to resolve the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict.

Hungary. In April 2001, Parliament rejected a proposed law that would have tightened regulations on establishing religious organizations. According to the government, the main purpose of the law was to close certain loopholes by which some people are able to disguise economic activity with a religious guise. A major factor leading to rejection of the proposal was that its attempt to define religion would have undermined freedom of religion in Hungary.

Indonesia. Interfaith organizations increased and became more active. The Indonesian Peace Forum (FID), formed immediately following the December church bombings, brought together moderate leaders from all of the country's major religions. FID leaders, many of them prominent Muslims, deplored the attacks on the churches, called for a thorough government investigation, and formed their own investigative team. FID also sponsored a number of events to foster religious respect and an end to interreligious, ethnic, and separatist conflicts. Other similar organizations also hosted national and regional seminars to promote interfaith dialog and religious tolerance.

Jordan. In addition to the ongoing work by the two major government-sponsored institutions that promote interfaith understanding, the Government facilitated the holding of two international Christian conferences in government facilities in September 2000 and May 2001.

Kazakhstan. In April 2001, as part of its campaign to prevent the development of religious extremism, the Government sent to Parliament a draft series of amendments to the National Religion Law that would have placed significant restrictions on religious freedom. It included provisions to ban "extremist religious associations"; increase from 10 to 50 the number of members required to file for registration of a religious organization; limit the right of registration for Muslim groups to those "recommended" by the Mufti's organization; forbid missionary activities, including charity and activities conducted by citizens that are not formally declared to local authorities in advance; prohibit giving children a religious education or bringing them into religious groups against their will; and authorize local officials to suspend the activities of religious groups that conduct a religious activity outside of the place where they are registered. Following objections by religious and human rights organizations, foreign governments, and international organizations that the amendments would violate the country's constitution and its international commitments, the Government withdrew the draft amendments at the end of June 2001.

Kenya. In December 1999, a group of Christian, Muslim, and Hindu leaders provided an example of interfaith cooperation for participation in civil society by forming an alternative process to reform the Constitution, the Ufungamano Initiative. The Initiative, which originally opposed the Parliament-led process, merged with the Government-backed Parliamentary process in March 2001. In May the President approved the merger, which should facilitate efforts to advance constitutional reform.

Mozambique. In November 2000, various religious and civic society organizations, such as the League of Human Rights, the Islamic Council, the Christian Council, and the Bar Association formed a Civil Society Commission. The body investigated the deaths from asphyxiation of approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado. The Catholic Church and Caritas International, citing the country's successful transition from war to "peaceful communal living," hosted a conference in August 2000 in Maputo on peace and justice. The Catholic Church also published pastoral letters encouraging the faltering dialog between Frelimo and Renamo; strongly criticizing the November 2000 deaths of the approximately 100 prisoners in Montepuez, Cabo Delgado noted above; and strongly criticizing a rise in criminality and corruption, including the November 2000 killing of renowned journalist Carlos Cardoso.

Nigeria. Governor Makarfi of Kaduna state, a locality that had suffered loss of life in ethno/religious-based riots, visited many southern and middle-belt states to apologize to persons, originally from those areas who had fled Kaduna, for the loss of life during the Kaduna riots, to emphasize the importance of respecting diversity in Nigeria's multiethnic and multireligious society, and to encourage those who had left the state to return. In September 2000, Gombe state governor Abubakar Hashidu set up a judicial commission of inquiry, composed of Muslims and Christians, to investigate the causes of the religious clash that took place in the city of Bambam in 2000. Federal government officials and state governors of Zamfara, Sokoto, Kano, and Kaduna states met with a variety of U.S. government officials to discuss the 2000 religious riots, the enactment of Shari'a law, and ways to allay minority religious group concerns.

Peru. The Catholic Church is the most politically active religious denomination and has significant political influence. During the period covered by this report, at the request of the Government, and because of the Church's reputation for honesty, prominent members of the Church played a pivotal role in democratization and anti-corruption initiatives.

Poland. Polish authorities reacted quickly to sporadic incidents of harassment and violence against Jews and vandalism of Jewish and Catholic cemeteries, mostly generated by skinheads and other marginal elements of society. Government authorities consistently criticized such actions and pledged to prevent similar acts in the future.

Russia. In contrast to the reluctance of the previous administration to address the issue, President Putin and his administration took a very public stand against anti-Semitism, and the presidential administration and other government officials increasingly were vocal about the need for societal tolerance in a multiethnic and multiconfessional society.

Rwanda. Rwanda saw improvements this year, such as the lifting of restrictions on Jehovah's Witnesses meeting and preaching publicly, the release of Jehovah's Witnesses in detention, and improved relations between the Catholic Church and the Government. By the end of the period covered by this report, the Government had stopped restricting religious meetings at night, and had lifted local restrictions on meetings for worship and proselytizing. Senior government officials intervened personally with local officials to ensure that religious freedom is respected at all government levels, and local church members reported that harassment of members by local officials has ceased and that they now enjoy religious freedom. Senior clergy of the Catholic Church reported that relations between the Church and the Government had improved because of collaboration and dialog in the areas of education and reconciliation. The Church and the Government moved closer to a resolution of the question of using churches as genocide memorials, and several churches were reconsecrated and returned to serving the community.

Part III: U.S. Actions to Promote International Religious Freedom

The promotion of religious freedom involves far more than the public airing of violations. Productive work often is done behind the scenes, for the very simple reason that governments or nations are unlikely to respond positively when rebuked in public.

However, it is sometimes necessary for the United States, and the international community, openly to denounce particularly abhorrent behavior by another nation. The 1998 International Religious Freedom Act mandates Presidential action in cases of particularly egregious violations of religious freedom, although it grants considerable flexibility in deciding on what action to take. Thus in September 2000, the Secretary of State, acting under the authority of the President, designated five countries—Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan—as "countries of particular concern" under the Act for having engaged in or tolerated particularly severe violations.

In addition, the Secretary identified Serbia and the Taliban regime of Afghanistan as having committed similar violations.

In general the best public method of promoting religious freedom is to advocate the universal principles—in particular the inviolable dignity of the human person—that are nourished when religious freedom is valued and protected. This approach continues to be integrated into public U.S. foreign policy channels, through international exchanges, Worldnet and Voice of America broadcasts, a religious freedom web site in the home page of the Department of State, conferences, public opinion polling, Congressional hearings, and speeches and press conferences by senior U.S. foreign policy officials.

Throughout the world, our overseas diplomatic missions are our front line in promoting the right of religious freedom and opposing violations of that right. Frequently the Chief of Mission has led the way, but other members of our missions do their part in pursuing these goals. U.S. Mission efforts inevitably are centered on human rights officers, as well as consular officers, who serve as the eyes and ears of the mission in its search for information, and its voice in the advocacy of religious freedom. Their work is facilitated by the wisdom and practical knowledge of local national embassy staff colleagues, whose contributions to international religious freedom frequently advance the interests of the United States. Public affairs officers coordinate the vital work of public diplomacy in order to present U.S. policy with accuracy and thoroughness.

No less important is the tone and context set by senior U.S. officials when they speak publicly on the subject of religious freedom, or privately with foreign heads of government and other policy makers. The President, the Secretary of State, and many senior State Department officials have addressed the issue in venues throughout the world. Within the United States, a critical role is played by the Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agencies responsible for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers who are fleeing religious persecution. The Department of State is responsible for training some of the officials who interview refugee applicants; the Department of Justice is responsible for training those officials who interview both refugee and asylum applicants, and those who adjudicate their cases (see Appendices).

The fulcrum of the effort to promote religious freedom lies in a State Department office established in the summer of 1998, and further mandated by the International Religious Freedom Act—the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. The office is headed by an Ambassador-at-Large who serves as the principal advisor to the President and the Secretary of State on religious freedom. The Ambassador at Large recommends U.S. policies on religious freedom and oversees the implementation of those policies, both in the United States and worldwide. With the Ambassador lies the task of integrating U.S. policy on religious freedom into the mainstream of U.S. foreign policy, and—at the same time—into the structure of the Foreign Service and the Department of State.

The Secretary of State, through the Offices of International Religious Freedom and Country Reports and Asylum Affairs (both in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor), is responsible for preparing the annual report to Congress on the status of religious freedom worldwide. In carrying out this task, the Bureau draws on U.S. mission reporting, visits by the Ambassador-at-Large and his staff to individual countries, participation in multilateral meetings and conferences, and on evidence provided by religious and human rights NGO's, religious organizations and individuals.

Monitoring and reporting also are guided by the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (CIRF), established by the 1998 Act. The Commission, whose members are appointed by Congress and the President, is independent from the Department of State. The CIRF produces its own report and recommends to the President and the Secretary of State the designation of certain countries as Countries of Particular Concern. Many of the accomplishments and initiatives of the CIRF are contained in this report's country chapters, each of which broadly addresses U.S. efforts to promote religious freedom.

THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The United States has done much in the last year to promote freedom of religion and conscience for all people, and increasingly has become active in promoting religious freedom abroad. The Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to more than a dozen countries during the period covered by this report. Religious freedom issues were discussed in countries as diverse as Belgium, India, Nigeria, Russia, China, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Additionally U.S. embassies raised religious freedom issues at the highest levels of government and in multilat-

eral fora, such as the 57th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in April 2001.

Both President Bush and Secretary of State Powell reiterated the U.S. Government's commitment to supporting international religious freedom. At the National Prayer Breakfast on February 1, 2001, the President pointed out the crucial contributions that faith can make to a nation: justice, compassion, and promoting a civil and generous society. In remarks made on May 3, 2001, to the American Jewish Committee, he condemned abuses against religious groups in several countries. Calling the freedom of religion the "first freedom of the human soul," he declared that the U.S. should speak for that freedom in the world.

In testimony to Congress during his confirmation hearing and on similar occasions afterwards, Secretary of State Powell confirmed the U.S. Government's intent to continue supporting the full range of human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and conscience. In Washington and in other capitals around the world, the Secretary emphasized to foreign leaders the rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which includes the right to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

Secretary Albright took formal action against certain countries last year. In 2000 the Secretary again designated Burma, China, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan as "countries of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for engaging in or tolerating "particularly severe violations" of religious freedom. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan was, as a matter of policy, also identified for the second consecutive year as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom, though it cannot be designated as a "country of particular concern" because it is not a government recognized by the United States. Secretary Albright removed in January 2001 the formal identification of the Milosevic regime in Yugoslavia—identified in 1999 and 2000 as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom—after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.

The following section summarizes some of the many efforts undertaken by various elements of the U.S. Government's foreign policy community to promote religious freedom. It is by no means exhaustive; rather, it endeavors to provide by way of illustrative examples a portrait of U.S. actions. Further details may be found in the individual country chapters.

Afghanistan. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated the Taliban regime, which controls most of Afghanistan, as a "particularly severe violator" of religious freedom.

Argentina. The U.S. Embassy continued to assist with the Government's implementation of a Holocaust Education Project carried out under the auspices of the International Holocaust Education Task Force. In April and May 2001, the Embassy co-sponsored with the Simon Wiesenthal Center an exhibit on the Holocaust titled "The Courage to Remember."

Armenia. Embassy officials met with the State Council on Religions to urge that progress be made towards registering Jehovah's Witnesses. The Embassy also maintained regular contact with the Catholicosate at Echmiatsin and with leaders of other major religious and ecumenical groups in the country, as well as with traveling regional representatives of foreign-based religious groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, and raised their concerns with the Government. U.S. officials met with representatives of faith-based groups which have followers in Armenia as well as with representatives of the Armenian government.

Austria. In September 2000, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution criticizing Austria and other countries because of "conscious propaganda" against religious minorities. In October 2000, the Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to Vienna to discuss religious freedom issues with government officials and religious representatives. In March 2001, the U.S. Government issued a statement strongly criticizing Joerg Haider's verbal attack against the leader of the country's Jewish community. The Ambassador met with the Chancellor and the Minister for Social Security and Generations to press U.S. views on the problems inherent in the country's laws on religion as well as U.S. views on the work of the Austrian Government's office on sects.

Azerbaijan. Throughout the year, U.S. Embassy officers and the Ambassador communicated their concerns about reported violations of the law on religion to representatives of the Department of Religious Affairs, its successor, the State Commission for Work with Religious Structures, Parliament, and the presidential administration. Embassy officers also traveled to the regions to speak directly with local authorities and religious groups who reported harassment. The Embassy maintains a number of contacts with senior Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders in Azerbaijan.

Belarus. In July 2000, following the arrest of BOAC priest Spasyuk, representatives of the U.S. Embassy met with government officials to press for his release and to urge authorities to respect the rights of the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalous Church parishioners to gather and worship. Representatives of the U.S. Embassy had frequent contacts with leaders and members of religious communities and worked with Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) representatives to promote religious freedom. In Washington officials of the Department of State met on a number of occasions with representatives of the Government of Belarus to raise issues in support of religious freedom and other human rights concerns.

Belgium. In October 2000, the Director of the State Department's Office of Religious Freedom traveled to Brussels and met with the director of the Belgian Government's Center for Information and Advice on Harmful Sectarian Organizations. There he expressed U.S. concern that the very existence of a government-mandated agency to provide information on "harmful" organizations strongly suggests an official judgment that the groups on which it maintains data are in fact "harmful," which in turn could have a chilling effect on religious freedom in Belgium.

Bosnia and Herzegovina. The U.S. Government provided financial support to the Government's Human Rights Chamber, which hears cases on religious discrimination. The Ambassador frequently met with the principal religious leaders, individually and collectively, to urge them to work toward moderation and tolerance between ethnic communities. In addition the Embassy publicly condemned instances of religious discrimination or attacks against religious communities or buildings, and encouraged leaders from all ethnic groups and members of the international community to speak out as well. The U.S. Agency for International Development provided funding to train lawyers and judges concerning human rights, including religious freedom.

Bulgaria. The Embassy remained engaged closely with the Government and Parliament in discussions of a proposed law on religious denominations that could have created serious religious freedom concerns. The Ambassador met with senior members of the Government and Parliament to convey the U.S. Government's concern about many aspects of the proposal. After the Embassy's repeated urging to seek the view of outside religion law scholars, Parliament forwarded the draft to the Council of Europe for review and comment. Action on the law was deferred indefinitely.

Burma. Embassy staff met repeatedly with leaders of Buddhist, Christian, and Islamic religious groups, members of the faculties of schools of theology, and other religious-affiliated organizations and NGO's to discuss religious freedom and other human rights issues. In 1999 and also in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Burma as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

China. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated China a country of particular concern under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom. The U.S. Government, Department of State, U.S. Embassy in Beijing, and U.S. Consulates General in Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Shenyang all made concerted efforts to encourage greater religious freedom during the year. The Department of State sent a number of Chinese religious leaders and scholars to the U.S. on international visitor programs to observe the role that religion plays in the United States. The Embassy also brought experts on religion from the United States to China to speak about the role of religion in American life and public policy. In March 2001, Chinese officials refused to meet with U.S. diplomats from the Department of State's Office of International Religious Freedom during their visit to China to examine the situation of religious liberty. Nevertheless U.S. officials in Washington and Beijing continued to protest Chinese Government actions to curb religious freedom, including the destruction of unregistered places of worship in Wenzhou, the arrests of followers of the Falun Gong spiritual movement, the crackdowns on Tibetan Buddhists and on Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang, and the arrests of Christian ministers and believers. The lack of improvement in religious freedom in China was a key factor in the U.S. decision to introduce again a resolution critical of China's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

Egypt. The subject of religious freedom was raised by all levels of the U.S. Government, including by the President, Secretary of State, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, and the Ambassador. In addition visiting congressional delegations raised religious freedom issues during visits with government officials. In January 2001, the Director of the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited the country and met with government officials and community activists. The Embassy investigated every complaint of religious discrimination

brought to its attention. During a public speech in March 2001, the Ambassador criticized anti-Semitism in the media. The Embassy also supported efforts to strengthen civil society, including training for nongovernmental organizations that promote religious tolerance.

France. Embassy officers met several times with government officials and members of Parliament and also with a variety of private citizens, religious organizations, and NGO's involved in the issue of religious freedom. U.S. Senators also discussed religious freedom issues with senior government officials during visits United States.

Georgia. Senior U.S. Government officials raised U.S. concerns about harassment of and attacks against "non-traditional" religious minorities with senior Georgian government officials, including the President, Parliament Speaker, and Internal Affairs and Justices Ministers. The U.S. Ambassador also raised this issue with the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Embassy officials regularly met with representatives of the Jehovah's Witnesses, Baptist Church, and Assemblies of God, as well as with NGO's concerned with religious freedom.

Germany. The U.S. Government expressed its concerns to state and federal authorities over infringement of individual rights because of religious affiliation posed by the screening of foreign firms for possible Scientology affiliation. In these discussions, U.S. officials pointed out that the use of so-called "sect filters" to prevent persons from practicing their professions is an abuse of their rights, as well as a discriminatory business practice. The government of Germany subsequently changed the language of its sect filters, so that firms owned, managed by, or employing Scientologists could bid on government contracts.

India. U.S. Embassy and consulate officials engaged with important leaders of all the significant minority communities. The NGO community in the country is extremely active with regard to religious freedom, and mission officers met with local NGO's regularly. In December 2000, a U.S. diplomat with the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom visited Delhi and Mumbai to meet with Hindu, Christian and Muslim leaders, human rights activists, and government officials about religious freedom issues and U.S. commitment to help protect it. In early January 2001, Senator Arlen Specter visited New Delhi and Udaipur and inquired about reports of attacks on Christian minority members in India. In February 2001, Congressmen Royce, Bonior, McDermott, and Pitts met with members of the Christian community to discuss efforts to help victims of the Gujarat earthquake in a secular and fair manner, and to discuss particular concerns of various denominations of the Christian community.

Indonesia. By supporting workshops, conferences, speaker programs, Fulbright scholars, and visits by Indonesians to the U.S., Embassy and USAID officials worked with Indonesian and international NGO's to develop methods to mitigate religious conflict and to combat religious intolerance. U.S. government officials expressed serious concern over the forced conversions of Christians and Muslims in the Moluccas. The Embassy and USAID supported local NGO and Indonesian government efforts to bring victims of forced conversions to Jakarta to testify before human rights organizations and Indonesian government officials. The Embassy and USAID worked with the Asia Foundation and the State Institute of Islamic Studies in Jakarta to develop a new course stressing tolerance and respect for human rights. USAID funded public service announcements promoting interfaith tolerance that were broadcast on major commercial and government television stations from January to March 2001. The Embassy also encouraged Indonesian government officials to lift restrictions against the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Iran. Since 1982 the U.S. Government has co-sponsored each year since 1982 a resolution regarding the human rights situation in Iran offered by the European Union at the annual meeting of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. The United States has supported a similar resolution offered each year during the U.N. General Assembly. The U.S. Government has supported strongly the work of the U.N. Special Representative on Human Rights for Iran and called on the Iranian Government to grant him admission and allow him to conduct his research (he has been denied entry visas since 1996). In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Iran as a "country of particular concern."

Iraq. The Secretary of State designated Iraq a "country of particular concern" in 1999 and 2000.

Israel. The U.S. Embassy consistently raised issues of religious freedom with the Government at working levels with the Foreign Ministry, the police, and the Prime Minister's office. The Ambassador and other Embassy representatives routinely met with Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Baha'i leaders, as well as with NGO's that follow human rights and religious freedom issues, such as the Association for Civil

Rights in Israel, the Israel Religious Action Center, Adalah, the Interreligious Coordinating Council in Israel, and the Anti-Defamation League.

Jordan. In January 2001, the Embassy sponsored a program on interreligious dialog and tolerance. Embassy officers assisted private religious groups to obtain official registration.

Kazakhstan. The Ambassador and other officers of the U.S. Embassy, as well as senior State Department officials, lobbied intensively against the draft amendments to the National Religion Law. The Embassy coordinated closely with the OSCE Center in Almaty in arranging for an expert evaluation of the amendments. The Embassy's Charge d'Affaires and human rights officer joined two OSCE delegations that presented the evaluation to officials. The human rights officer also met frequently with human rights activists and representatives of many churches concerned about the draft amendments. He shared information with the UK-based Keston Institute, which publicized the debate over the draft amendments in its internationally distributed publications. These efforts, combined with those of religious and other human rights organizations and foreign governments, contributed to the Government's decision to withdraw the amendments at the end of June 2001. In other actions, the Embassy actively assisted the American citizens in Aktau who were ultimately expelled from the country for allegedly illegal religious activities. In May 2001, the Embassy sponsored the 10-day visit of a U.S. academic expert on Islam to conduct a series of programs on the role of Islam in a secular society.

Laos. The Charge d'Affaires and other Embassy representatives raised high profile cases with high-ranking MFA officials and relevant provincial governors. Embassy representatives also met with major religious leaders in the country and otherwise encouraged religious freedom despite an environment restricted by the government-owned and government-controlled media. In December 2000 and June 2001, the Embassy helped to facilitate the visit of a representative of the Institute for Global Engagement, a private foundation promoting religious freedom and interdenominational dialog, who had frank exchanges with Lao officials.

Nigeria. In September 2000, a representative from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom traveled to northern Nigeria. He visited five states, where he discussed with religious leaders and government officials religious freedom issues to better understand the dynamics of interreligious conflict in the context of the implementation of Shari'a in northern Nigeria. Embassy officers maintained an ongoing dialogue with religious leaders and government officials in order to promote religious freedom.

Saudi Arabia. Senior U.S. government officials raised the issue of religious freedom with government officials on numerous occasions. Officials from the State Department's Office of International Religious Freedom met with senior government officials to confirm the Government's commitment to permit private non-Muslim worship and to discuss other concerns related to religious freedom. U.S. Embassy officers met with Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials to deliver and discuss the U.S. Government's 2000 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom and to protest the detention of Filipino worshippers.

Sudan. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Sudan as a "country of particular concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom.

Tajikistan. The U.S. Embassy supported programs designed to create a better understanding of how democracies address the issue of secularism and religious freedom. Several participants in these programs are key members of the opposition who now, through their writings and their debate on the definition of secularism, reveal a more sophisticated understanding of the concept and of how secularism and religious activism can coexist in a free society.

Vietnam. The U.S. Ambassador raised religious freedom issues with senior cabinet ministers including the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, senior Government and Communist Party advisors, the head of the Government's Office of Religion, Deputy Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Public Security, and the chairpersons of Provincial People's Committees around the country. Other Embassy and Consulate General officials also raised U.S. concerns on religious freedom with senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Public Security and with provincial officials. Department of State officials in Washington commented publicly on the status of religious freedom in Vietnam on several occasions, and President Clinton commented on human rights in general and freedom of religion in particular during his historic visit to Vietnam in November 2000.

Yugoslavia. Since U.S. relations were reestablished in November 2000, Embassy officials have met with representatives of religious and ethnic minority communities in Serbia and Montenegro and with government officials to promote respect of religious freedom and protection of human rights. The U.S. Government also supports

the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the NATO-led Kosovo Force (KFOR), including their efforts to protect Orthodox churches, shrines, and other religious sites to prevent any renewed outbreak of attacks on such sites. In 1999 and again in 2000, the Secretary of State designated Serbia under the Milosevic regime as a “country of particular concern.” This designation was lifted in January 2001 after Vojislav Kostunica was elected president.